

TOUR TIMES



A publication from Mary Valentine Tours

**SPACES ARE STILL AVAILABLE FOR OUR MAY AND SEPTEMBER 2025
TOURS OF NORTHERN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND. SEE PAGE 2.**

Dear Reader,

I've been thinking recently about the surprises I've encountered since I first visited the UK more than 35 years ago.

The biggest surprise is that I've come back more than 50 times and still haven't seen everything that interests me.

The second surprise: that I would one day be leading tours of the UK . What had been a personal goal turned into a small business. So far, our tours have explored England, Wales, and NOW Scotland. Can Ireland be next?

The third surprise involves the variety of my encounters over the years, some of them planned and some serendipitous, including then-Prince Charles, whom I encountered in a shopping mall. This involved a quick greeting. He said, "hello," and so did I, before he moved on to greet others.

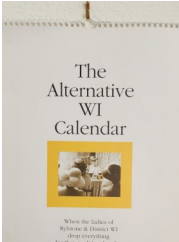


I spent an afternoon with Dame Zandra Rhodes (pink hair), who designed for Princess Diana and Freddie Mercury, as she took us around her design studio.

The most intellectual encounters have been over tea with Nicola Beaumann, founder of Persephone Books, in Bath. (For a detailed profile of Nicola, see our May-June 2024 newsletter.)



The Calendar Girls from the North Yorkshire Dales provided the most entertaining encounters. Working with a brilliant photographer, these unassuming women starred in a nude calendar to raise money for leukemia (now called blood cancer) research. They let me accompany them to appearances in the UK and the US.



Their success far outstripped their goals - to sell a few hundred calendars and raise a few thousand pounds. Since its first publication, more than 300,000 copies have sold worldwide, for a total of six 6 million pounds. In the US, that comes to \$7.8 million. The Calendar Girls story led to a film, a stage play, and even a musical, which still tours the UK..

The Calendar Girls are currently celebrating the **25th anniversary** of their calendar.

Congratulations!



After 25 years, they're still wishing everyone a merry Christmas and happy nude year.

The bottom line: You never know what surprises await as you travel.

Mary

SPACES ARE AVAILABLE FOR OUR MAY AND SEPTEMBER TOURS. HERE’S HOW TO JOIN US.

To reserve a space on our **May** tour (May 13-22), send a payment of \$2500.00. which includes a non-refundable deposit of \$500,00, to Mary Valentine at the address below. The balance (\$4150.00) is due no later than March 1, 2025. We can arrange an alternative installment plan if that’s easier for you.

To reserve a space on our **September** tour, (Sept. 2-11), send a payment of \$2500,00, which includes a \$500 non-refundable deposit, to Mary Valentine at the address below. The balance (\$4150) is due no later than March 1, 2025. We can arrange an alternative installment plan if that’s easier for you.

Make your check payable to Mary Valentine
15030 Ventura Blvd. #456
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
You can also send payments via Zelle at 3238686394.

Daily Schedule. We specialize in taking you to spots off the beaten track, locations you won’t find on most itineraries. Here’s what you can expect.

Day 1 Tour begins. (May13 or September 2)

- Arrive at London Heathrow airport
- Check into Sofitel Hotel at Terminal 5.
- Group dinner starts the tour.

Day 2 Nottingham Fountains Abbey Harome

- Our coach picks us up at our hotel and we head for Nottingham.
- We tour the National Justice Museum, a museum of crime, punishment and social justice in Nottingham. The building houses a Victorian courtroom, and Georgian jail cells that date back hundreds of years. Take part in a historical trial re-enactment, and experience one of Georgian England’s favorite entertainments - a public execution.
- Lunch break on your own
- We stop at Fountains Abbey. Founded in 1132 by thirteen Benedictine Monks, Fountains Abbey became one of the largest, richest and the most influential abbeys in Great Britain until Henry VIII ordered it destroyed in 1539.



- Check into the Pheasant Hotel in Harome. Named Small Hotel of the Year 2024.
- Explore Harome before dinner.
- Group dinner at The Star in Harome, which has been awarded a Michelin star for its extraordinary food.

Day 3 Thirsk Newcastle on Tyne Edinburgh

- Visit Thirsk, made famous in “All Creatures Great and Small”. See Seigfried’s home and veterinary practice.
- Stop in Newcastle on Tyne for lunch
- View Anthony Gormley’s massive Angel of the North, one of the most talked about pieces of public art ever produced. Made from 200 tons of steel, it has a wingspan of 54 meters and a red-brown color that comes from the weathering steel which can withstand winds of more than 100 miles per hour.
- Take guided tour of St. Giles Cathedral, founded in 1124.
- **Group dinner**



St. Giles

Day 4 Edinburgh

Our activities for the day include:

- A visit at the Scottish Parliament where we'll learn about its history and view its award-winning architecture.
- A walk along the Royal Mile
- A stop at the National Gallery of Scotland tour if the weather makes Royal Mile tour undoable.
- A visit in at the Writers Museum which honors three Scottish authors: Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, and Robert Louis Stevenson.
- Group dinner



The Writers Museum

Day 5 Falkirk Stirling Oban

- Enjoy the scenic drive to Falkirk.
- Experience being “lifted” from one canal to another on the Falkirk Wheel.
- Visit the Kelpies, the 100-foot-high equine sculptures.



The Kelpies

- Tour Stirling Castle, a former residence of the Stuart kings and queens. Explore its grand sculptures, gardens and exhibitions.



Stirling Castle

- View William Wallace Monument, a tribute to Sir William Wallace, a 13th- and 14th-century Scottish hero.
- Head to Oban.
- Explore the grounds of our lakeside hotel.
- Group dinner

Day 6 Oban and Glasgow

- Tour a whisky distillery whose history stretches back to the 11th century.
- Stop at McCaig's Tower, Scotland's “colosseum” and a distinctive part of the Oban skyline.
- Group dinner

Day 7 Glasgow

- Follow The City Centre Mural Trail, which features a diverse range of art set within one easy walking area.
- Visit the Tenement House to gain a picture of life in early 20th century .
- Enjoy a tour and afternoon tea at the Mackintosh at The Willow (in lieu of a group dinner).
- Free time



Day 8 The Lake District

- Take a boat tour of Lake Windemere (weather permitting).
- Go to Wordsworth’s Dove Cottage and Visitor Centre.
- Visit the shops in Ambleside.
- Group dinner

Day 9 Liverpool

- See the multi-million pound renovation of the central Liverpool Library.
- Tour Liverpool’s central museums – in easy walking distance of each other.
 - ◆ The Slavery Museum
 - ◆ The Museum of Liverpool
 - ◆ The Beatles Experience
- Group dinner

Day 10 Final Day: Birmingham and London Heathrow

- Stop in Birmingham at the Winterbourne House & Garden, home to beautiful antiques and over 6,000 plant species from around the world. Wander along the woodland walk, stroll through the hazelnut tunnel, cross the 1930’s Japanese Bridge
- Lunch on your own at the tearoom at Winterbourne.
- Arrive at Sofitel, London Heathrow Terminal 5.
- Closing dinner at the London Heathrow Sofitel



Note: There may be minor schedule modifications before the tours begin

FUNDAMENTAL FACTS ABOUT SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND

Population: Scotland: 5.4 million England:57 million

Official language: English. See separate article on Scottish slang below.

Currency: British Pound Sterling. You can use English pounds in Scotland, but you can’t use Scottish pounds in England.

Passport: Your passport should have at least two remaining blank pages for entry stamps. Your passport must be valid for at lease six months beyond the end of your trip.

Visa: A visa is not required of US citizens to enter England or Scotland.

Climate and weather. It will rain. Bring a broly and a waterproof jacket.

THIS MONTH’S LANGUAGE LESSON

English is the official language of Scotland, but like everywhere in the world, slang phrases are in constant use in Scotland. Scottish slang, also referred to as Scots dialect or Scots language, embodies a blend of words and phrase derived from the Gaelic language, old Scots, and English. Here are some slang phrases you may hear during our visit to Scotland:

Wee = small

Aye = yes

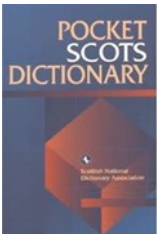
Bonnie = beautiful

Bairn = child

Craic the day? = How’s it going?

Fits the craic? = What’s happening?

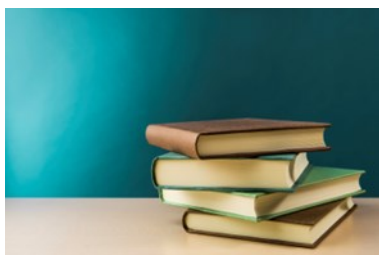
My head is mince = I’m confused.



THE BOOK CORNER Recommendations to get you in the mood to travel

Set in Scotland, this month's first recommendation, **Case Histories** by Kate Atkinson, features private investigator Jackson Brodie as he investigates what appear to be three separate cases. As he tracks down a missing little girl, takes on the case of an attacked office worker, and investigates the mental breakdown of a new mother, mysteries begin to merge as he sets to solve all of them. This is the first book in the Jackson Brodie series.

Also set in Scotland, our second book recommendation, Ken Follett's **Whiteout**, takes the reader on a search for a missing canister of a deadly virus. In the process of finding it, Follett unveils jealousies, distrust, sexual attraction, hidden traitors and unexpected heroes.



THE MEDIA ROOM



This month's recommendations reveal British fictional spies and politicians. Here are just a few of the available shows.

Slow Horses – A disgraced team of MI5 agents uncovers deadly conspiracies in this darkly witty spy thriller.

The Diplomat - Political secrets and personal stakes collide as a British ambassador navigates global crises. Outstanding performances by Keri Russell and Rufus Sewell.

Alex Rider – A reluctant teenage spy takes on deadly missions in this action-packed adaptation of Anthony Horowitz's novel. Horowitz's previous work includes **Foyle's War**, and **Magpie Murders**.

Happy marathon viewing.

In Next Month's Newsletter:

- ⇒ Why all the fuss about a dog? The story of Greyfriars Bobby
- ⇒ Why did couples rush off to Gretna Green in the 18th and 19th centuries?
- ⇒ Why the Lake District is considered one of the most beautiful spots in the world
- ⇒ What are the Cotswolds?
- ⇒ How do restaurants get a Michelin Star?

MEANWHILE . . .

We have a new **blog: Confessions of an Anglophile**. You'll find it at confessionsofananglophile.com.

Any questions? Contact Mary Valentine at 323.868.6394.





PASSPORT CENTRAL: Don’t throw out any expired passports.

In the past, we’ve emphasized in our newsletter the importance of making certain your passport is up to date, and we’ve given tips on how to expedite replacing an expired or lost passport. Now, let’s talk about what to do with your old, expired passports.

Writing on the Islands.com website, travel expert Kristin Conard argues that at first glance it would seem an expired passport should be tossed because it’s no longer usable. But, she says, consider the following:

-If you dump your expired passport into the trash, your information might fall into the wrong hands and become an identity theft issue.

-Keeping an expired passport may make it easier to obtain your next one. For example, you can hand it in along with your application for a new one. You’ll get it back quicker.

Old passports can hold sentimental value, and, just like the souvenirs you collect as you visit, they help jog your memory of your travels.

“The US Department of State advises people hold onto old passports, particularly if they used an old passport for a still-valid visa to use when going to a specific country.”

The bottom line: Play it safe. Keep your expired passport.

Keeping Your Passport Safe

Losing your passport can spoil even the best vacations. To minimize the headache of getting a new one while in a foreign country, consider the following suggestions.

- Take a photo of your passport and save it on your phone.
- Carry multiple photocopies stored in different pieces of luggage.
- Have your hotel keep it in its safe (but don’t forget to get it back before you leave!)
- If you’re going to carry your passport with you, consider using a belt bag.

REMINDER: England’s New Travel Requirement

Effective January 2025, travelers to the UK must fulfill a new requirement. An “Electronic Travel Authorization” (ETA) has been implemented that digitizes tourists’ requests to visit the country. In addition to completing an online application, tourists must pay a ten pound (\$13.00) application fee.

“Everyone wishing to travel to the UK – except British and Irish citizens - will need permission to travel in advance of coming here,” says the UK government’s site. The ETAs are linked to a traveler’s passport in an effort to speed up security checks.

Applications will be processed online. Check GOV.UK for details. You can also download the application at the App Store or Google Play.

Here’s to happy holidays. Let’s
promote a peaceful 2025.

